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a centre of historical associations and valued for its fish. To the South-west of the territory the plateau ends imperceptibly, and rivers running parallel to each other open out into ever widening grassy courses till they become merged in the Bangweolu swamp itself. These wide grassy margins which Europeans call *dambos* are characteristic of the rivers in this region. It is not unusual to plod half a mile of water-logged country to find perhaps a five-foot stream in the centre.

Forest trees cover the whole of the 'plateau' except where bare ridges, protruding in many places, show that the main rock floor is never far underneath. From the air the country has the appearance of an endless expanse of trees broken by numberless water-courses and dotted here and there with clusters of native huts and the small circular patches that represent their millet gardens. Natives distinguish three types of forest. First, the prevailing rather monotonous, semi-deciduous, bush forest, which they regard as their garden land: next the less common, tall, 'old forest' land, the relics of a more temperate climate. Here the trees of the upper story are perhaps twice as high as that of the ordinary woodland, so great is the contrast between the old and the newer forest. Lastly, when overlooking this country, one picks out deep patches of green along some of the river courses. These are '*mushitu* forests,' evergreen groves usually treated as sacred and often kept as the burying places of dead chiefs. They are peculiar to this country and are again survivals of a once ubiquitous forest evergreen.

These *umushitu* forests are the only parts of the countryside which do not change with the seasons. Immediately the rains are over—that is to say at the beginning of April—the grass begins to dry and turn brown. By July when the cold weather has well set in the leaves begin to come off the trees. By the end of August spring has come and with it the new leaf growth. As a natural protection from the hot sun, which immediately follows the month of early spring, the new leaves sprout in various shades of scarlet, turning to brilliant green as they grow. Each species changes at a slightly different time, and by mid-September the woodland is a mass of vivid colours of varying shades. This is cut short by the forest fires, and in a day the gay tints of spring and early summer are changed to blacks and browns. Even before the first rains of November the new green grass begins to shoot up along the river margins and the

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new grain is ripe? Why does one woman serve out porridge so that every one gets up quickly feeling satisfied, while the guests of another eat and still feel empty? The answer is magic (*ubwanga*). Food, and millet in particular, is specially subject to witchcraft (*ubuloshi*). Wizards stick horns in their granaries to attract the grain of other men. They also send out mysterious black birds (*mawa*) at night to steal the food of neighbours and convey it to their own granaries. How does this happen? The Bemba answers that he does not know, but that it is a well-known fact that wizards have more food than other men. A more subtle form of sorcery takes the goodness out of the millet while it is still growing in the gardens, so that when it is reaped and eaten it has no power to satisfy a hungry man. To protect himself against these dangers counter-magic is the gardener's only hope, and even without definitely suspecting witchcraft, all the Bemba I questioned told me that food could not be expected to last unless some magic of durability had been performed—a magic rite that would keep the granary full (*ukuisula pe na pe*) and would act upon the food so that one little eating pot would satisfy a family instead of two, and 'the little bit of porridge give strength to the heart' (*akabwali kalekosho mutima*).

All these results are produced by the Bemba charm *icibyalilo*, still almost universally used to-day. The form of the charm varies from family to family although there are certain common elements, such as the doctoring of the grain with medicine smoked through it (*ukufutikila*) or by sprinkling (*ukusansa*), the mixing of the old harvest with the new to maintain continuity, and some rite of sympathetic magic by which people are made to feel full with the new grain in order that this property of satisfaction may be conferred on the rest of the crop. All sorts of intermediate forms exist, and the fact that Christian women sometimes sign themselves with the cross before reaping to make the food last shows how strong is this belief that nothing but supernatural aid can carry a woman safely through the hazards of Bemba catering.

The full *icibyalilo* rites are complex and take place in three stages. At sowing, the medicinal herb (*umuti*), sometimes mixed with an activating principle like scrap iron or a piece of rubber, is mixed with the seeds that are sown and sometimes a small portion is buried in the centre of the field or little fire-stands built there for the cooking of the new grain at the approaching harvest. At

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e.g. *Mwamba wa pa Milenge*, 'The Mwamba who built on the Milenge River'.

This strong feeling for the preservation of the sites of old capitals is expressed ritually in a number of ways. After the burial of a chief the dead man's hut must be ceremonially destroyed, *ukutoba itembwe*, and a sacrifice of an ox offered. After the rubble on the house site has rotted away, a spirit shrine (*ulufuba*) is built on the spot, and prayers offered there subsequently. Many such shrines are still honoured. The ritual performed there ultimately depends on the Bemba belief, which natives readily express, that the *imipashi*, besides going up and down the land, being present in the huts of their descendants at dusk or dawn, or lingering on burial groves, may be expected to frequent the village site which they inhabited in life, and on which they died, and that they may readily be invoked there.[1]

The intense interest of the Bemba in these historical sites in their neighbourhood has a considerable sociological importance. Malinowski has given us information from a Melanesian Island to show how clan myths associated with certain geographical spots in the territory, constantly repeated by its members, and said to be owned by them, form what he calls a 'mythical charter' for the right to use the land.[2] Among the Bemba there is no developed mythology of the doings of miraculous beings associated with different localities, but many historical traditions of the actions of former chiefs, and of the whereabouts of their villages. One can only imagine that the performance of rites at these deserted sites, or even the constant narration of different happenings associated with these ancient *ifibolya*, gives the natives a valuable assurance that such powerful chiefs actually did live in the particular area and may be called upon to protect it, and that the present holder of the title, as the direct descendant of men who built capitals all over the district, has the requisite power to approach them.

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Burial-places, as distinct from deserted village sites, are forgotten quickly. The mortuary ritual of a commoner is hurried and unimpressive, and the burial-ground of a village is a place avoided by natives, and on which no rites are carried out. Chiefs are buried in clumps of evergreen swamp forests. The Citimukulu, Mwamba, Nkula, Cewe, and Nkweto at the big thicket known

[1] Chap. XVII.

[2] Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, 1934, vol. i, pp. 341–58.

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as Shimwalule in the Chinsali district, the most secret and carefully guarded shrine in the territory. The bodies of lesser chiefs and royal princesses are buried in another grove about four miles from Citimukulu's village.[1]

Other sacred spots in Bemba territory are certain rocks, waterfalls, caves, or other unusual geographical features, named after legendary beings, who are described either as having lived at the spot in question, as having been found there by the immigrant Bemba, or as having performed some dramatic action there—jumping into a waterfall or drowning in a lake. It must be remembered that on this flat plateau, roughly 700 miles across, the sight of a mountain or rocky crag is rare and waterfalls of impressive size are few. Natives tend to speak of even low hills with interest, and most rocky summits or big caves are associated with the names of supernatural beings, who may be invoked there by the hereditary priest in charge (*shimiapepo*) at the order of the territorial chief. These sacred spots are not believed to have been sites of human habitation, nor by their very nature could most of them have been inhabited. The spirits associated with them are emphatically stated never to have been chiefs. They are *ngulu*—the name also used for a man or woman who believes himself or herself to be possessed by ancestral spirits. Were they people at all? 'Yes, but not people who go about like we do' (*Te muntu ua kuendaendafye*). That is to say they are legendary figures quite outside the tribal hierarchy of spirits, of whom little is remembered. Some natives say they were the first inhabitants of the country, but others deny that they were ever human beings at all. Pythons are said to inhabit some of these sites and to be worshipped there.

There are thus two types of spirit centre in the country—those of famous chiefs of the past, whose lineage can still be traced and whose descendants rule over the present territory. These cleared the bush here and there, built villages, and made the *mpanga* 'warm', ruled successfully over communities, died, and became protective influences over the inhabited district. The other spirits, *ngulu*, are also believed to hold power over a definite locality, but they never belonged to the lineage group of the Bemba and their names are not associated with habitable village sites but only with remarkable features of the landscape which in themselves arouse awe.

[1] The site of the village of the first ancestress of the Bemba, Bwalya Cabala.

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way[1] and prepared by a specialist *yanga*, from whom its use may be bought. *Bwanga* is used by the individual to protect himself from hostile forces, such as sorcery. He uses charms to increase the lasting power of the food in his gardens or granary (*icibyalilo*). He occasionally purchases counter-magic if he suspects a sorcerer of bewitching his millet store. Now and then I have seen charms put in gardens as a protection against birds or thieves. But, compared to some of the neighbouring tribes, the Bemba resort to economic magic rarely.[2] It is never used in tribal rites or by the chief in his capacity of priest of the tribe. It can never affect the productivity of the whole land as distinct from the individual garden. All public prayers and ceremonies are addressed to the ancestral spirits, and it is significant that the chief himself is not expected to use charms at all as far as his crops are concerned. 'Why should Citimukulu use *icibyalilo* like a commoner does?' said the official in charge of the chief's gardens. 'Hasn't he prayed to the chiefs of the land to give him food?' This statement seemed to me to be significant.[3]

This preliminary account shows us, I think, how the religious rites of the Bemba must have integrated tribal food production formerly and stimulated hard work. We must now proceed to a more detailed description of the ritual itself and estimate more exactly the part it still plays at the present day.

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The spirit centres. The *imipashi* of the Bemba are approached in certain well-defined ways—calling on the names of the ancestors, usually at the same time spitting in the air (*ukupala mate*); prayers uttered by priests usually at one of the many shrines throughout the territory (*ukulumbula*)—and the offering of some material object such as cloth, flour, beer, chickens, sheep, or cattle to the spirits (*ukupepa*). The spirit centres at which the *imipashi* are invoked can be arranged in the order of their sacredness. They include:

[1] Often with the addition of a metal or part of an animal as an activating principle (*icishimba*).

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[2] The neighbouring Bisa of Cilubi Island, for instance, invariably used protective magic against thefts in their cassava gardens, and Doke describes many of the same kind of charms among the Lamba (op. cit., pp. 294–5). Whether this greater reliance on magic is associated with a less powerful belief in the chief I do not know.

[3] The supernatural functions of some S. African chiefs differ in this respect, since the Zulu, Swazi, and Tschwana chiefs owe much of their power to the possession of rain magic, and many of the S. African chiefs are 'doctored' magically at the beginning of their reign and at subsequent ceremonies.

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(1) *The individual's hut.* The hut of each householder is in a sense a shrine, since the spirits of his own ancestors and those of his wife are supposed to linger there, especially at dusk or in the early morning. The *imipashi* are addressed there at the birth, marriage, illness, or death of a member of the family or at any other event that concerns the group. In some areas a special calabash is reserved for the spirits, and beer is placed as an offering there overnight,[1] but I did not find any specially sacred spot in the hut reserved for the *imipashi*, as Smith and Dale describe among the Ila,[2] and as is common among some of the Southern Bantu. Objects to be blessed are placed at the head of the owner's bed as will be described.

(2) *Village shrines.* The hut of the headman is the centre of the religious life of the village, but in addition small shrines of grass about three feet high (*nfuba*) are built to the spirits. I have seen these standing outside some headmen's huts, although this is rare nowadays, or else outside the village, usually among the garden beds. They are still quite commonly built in the latter position since their presence is more easily concealed than when they are built in the village. There may be one, two, or even up to twenty-five of these small spirit huts built, usually one to the headman's own ancestors, and the others to the dead chiefs of the district. The headman of the village is always the officiating priest at these shrines.

(3) *Dead chiefs' villages* (*ifibolya*). The sites of dead chiefs' villages are honoured as spirit centres (cf. Chap. XIII). Shrines are built on them after the chief's burial and, though these fall into decay, they are rebuilt on special occasions as long as memory lasts.[3] The sites of villages made by the first Bemba chiefs or chieftainesses are famous ritual centres with big shrines about six feet high built on them (e.g. the Shrine of Katongo Mukulu on the Lubu River or that of Bwalya Cabala near Citimukulu's village). Others are only known by the local people. All are rebuilt at the time of a big ceremony at the orders of the chief of the *icalo*, and the grass around them cleared on less important occasions (*ukukungula*). They are in the charge of local priests (*bashimapepo*),

[1] This practice is more common where Bisa influence is predominant.
[2] Smith and Dale, vol ii, p. 166.
[3] Compare the custom of the Bangweolu natives of planting a tree on the site of the dead chief's hut.

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usually descendants of the dead chief, and directly responsible to his living successor.

(4) *Natural phenomena* (*ngulu*). Remarkable natural phenomena like big waterfalls or caves are also considered to be spirit-centres believed to have been inhabited by legendary personages, e.g. the cave under the Cishimba Waterfall near Cilubula, the Canga cave filled with bats near Kasama, a queer pointed stone in the river near Kapatu, warm springs at Mwamba Kambwale in Munkonge's country where women only may catch the fish, &c. Many of these sites are also associated with a form of snake worship, or are believed to be inhabited by a python. Battle-grounds or places where many people have been known to be killed, are also feared and believed to be haunted by spirits (e.g. Musonda Cinanda in the Chinsali district where a number of Arabs are said to have been slaughtered). All these *ngulu* sites are in charge of local *bashimapepo* acting under the orders of the chief.

(5) *Burial groves of dead chiefs* (*mwalule*). It is characteristic of the centralized government of the Bemba that their big chiefs are buried in one place—Shimwalule in the Chinsali district—while the lesser chiefs and chieftainesses are buried in the grove of Bwalya Cabala near Citimukulu's village.[1] The great grove, a place kept with great secrecy and lying at about four days' walk from the capital, is said to have the greatest *imipashi* of the land. The priest in charge, the *Shimwalule*, is himself the burier of the Citimukulu, and is in a sense the ultimate authority in the whole spiritual hierarchy since he alone can sacrifice for rain,[2] or in the old days could pray for success in war.

(6) *Sacred relic shrines* (*babenye*). The Paramount Chief, all the bigger territorial chiefs, and the most important *bakabilo*, possess relic shrines which are considered the ultimate source of their spiritual powers. These shrines are huts which resemble ordinary houses, but have their doors barred with logs or ivory tusks, and are kept with the utmost secrecy. They are hedged with taboos, and may only be entered by the chief, the 'wives of the relics' (*bamukabenye*), old women, descendants of the first chief's wives, and by the five most important *bakabilo*. They contain relics (usually stools) of the first holders of each particular title, by which the tribal spirits may be invoked. The most important religious rites of the Bemba are those by which a new Paramount acquires his

[1] Cf. pp. 240–1.

[2] Drought is very rare in this area.

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babenye, and so the right of access to his ancestral spirits. The ceremonies he performs at the relic houses are prayers for the benefit of the whole tribe. In the case of the economic rites, he initiates at the *benye* hut a whole series of ritual acts which are subsequently performed throughout the land.

Thus, even a study of the places where the Bemba spirits may be called and the persons who are able to invoke their help, illustrates quite clearly the dual function of the ceremonies first as ritualizing the individual emotions associated with each economic activity and next as sacralising the political structure on which the tribe depends. The commoner calls on his own ancestors inside his own dwelling on occasions which affect the welfare of his family only. The headman appointed by the chief does the same in the case of the economic processes which affect the welfare of the village as a whole. Nowadays he does not always wait to perform his own local ceremony till he hears that the *mfumu* has carried out his, but his chief can still be called the spiritual head of the district since the priests of the different *ngulu*, or those in charge of the dead chief's *ifibolya*, offer the prayers at these sacred spots at his orders. He not only gives them the command, but he provides the cloth, beer, flour, or animal sacrifices which may be required for this purpose from time to time. The Paramount himself has already been described as in supreme command of the supernatural resources of the whole tribal territory, and a series of sacrifices offered, first in his own *icalo*, but next at the orders of the territorial chiefs, at the spirit centres in their respective districts will now be described.

Special Ceremonial at the Citimukulu's Court.

Any economic rite, whether tree-cutting or harvest, can take three different forms at the Paramount's capital:

(*a*) The ceremony can be performed by the 'wives of the relics' at the *babenye* shrines of the chief, and in this case the rite is considered to affect the welfare of the chief and his own village in particular. It is his private affair more or less, and there is no spectacular ceremonial or large gathering of people at such times.

(*b*) A more complicated version of the ceremony takes place when the *bakabilo* assemble to purify the chief so that he may enter his own relic shrines with the 'wives of the relics' and the four senior *bakabilo*, and himself invoke the help of the tribal spirits there.

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Sacred relic shrine at Mwamba's village. Note the elephant tusks piled in front of the door.

Shrine built on the site of a dead chieftainess's hut. Mukukamfumu, 1931. Note the red cloth offering hung inside.

[facing p. 372]

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Harvest ceremony. Bringing beer to the chiefs. Npika district, 1933. Note beer in gourd and man about to roll on his back to salute the dread chiefs.

Shrines to ancestral spirits built outside a village.

[facing p. 378]

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mukulu tried to organize it again in 1933, but hunger forced his wives to eat up the supply of Kaffir corn he had planted for the purpose, and he was never able to collect sufficient grain to make the beer.

(*e*) *Thanksgiving rites.* In Bisa districts a special rite of thanksgiving as distinct from the *ukuposela* is performed in August to September or after the main millet harvest has been reaped. This is known as *ukupelo bwalua kuli mfumu*, 'to give the (dead) chiefs beer'. For instance, near Shiwa Ndandu in August 1933 I found special fire-stands (*amafwasa*) had been built in the open near three village spirit shrines especially for the heating of water for this beer. The villagers gathered round the shrines, men one side and women the other, and the headman began to call on the chiefs of the land: 'You, Sir Matipa, Sir Maluma Lubande, you, the owner of the chiefs of the Bisa. You know your companions, all the other chiefs. Call them that they come to drink our beer. We have come to pray for life. Make us go in peace. We have brewed beer. We have brought it to you to honour you. And then we beg for peace. May we eat food! We pray for porridge. May the blood of animals be seen too! Save us from the locusts'—a pause—'Now I have finished.'

After this the wife of the headman poured hot water on the big gourd of beer standing by the spirit hut and she drank, afterwards rolling on the ground in the royal salute 'because she was the owner who brewed the beer' (*ni mwine ualongo bwalua*). She was followed by the rest of the village in order of age,[1] and dancing and singing began round the shrines, each performer rolling on the ground as to a chief.

Such a ceremonial drinking at the spirit shrines may have been much more common in all Bemba villages formerly. I have heard of it happening after a hunt at the nets, and have seen gourd beer-dippers lying in spirit shrines ready for a beer drink. But in this Bisa district, harvest ceremonies of this kind are performed to this day, and they are followed in some cases by a ritual hunt to discover the will of the spirits.

All such harvest or first-fruit rites must be considered as a means of sacralizing the gathering of the new harvest, encouraging the community to handle the essential food supplies with reverence, or emphasizing, as Radcliffe-Browne would say, its 'social

[1] Except the headman, who may only drink in the village.

Social Structure

When a man dies his name, his kinship duties and his hereditary bow are passed on to his sister's son or to her grandson through a daughter. The heir actually becomes the dead man in a social sense: he adopts the kinship terms the latter used, calling, for instance, 'maternal nephew' the person he would previously have called 'brother'. The same positional succession takes place in the matrilineal line for women, and a dead woman will be replaced by her sister or a maternal granddaughter. In this system women are honoured as the bearers of many children and such a woman is said to found a house.

In the case of the royal crocodile clan the maintenance of descent is even more important. All senior chieftainships in Lubemba, the country of the Bemba, are held by members of the royal lineage.

A successor to such a chieftainship has access to 'great spirits', those of his dead predecessors, and he not only prays to them at the sacred shrines in his capital, but he acquires supernatural powers in his own person, so that he can bless and curse. His good health and vitality bring blessings to the community, and his ill-health or death, the reverse.

Princesses have the special duty to bear fine children in order to provide the country with chiefs, and they are honoured for doing so. The spirits of royal women are mentioned in prayer in tender and grateful terms as 'those who carried us in skins on their backs and gave us suck'. The first ancestress, Bwalya Cabala, is buried in a grove which is one of the most sacred places in Lubemba.[1]

Bemba clans are not segmentary. The effective kinship group within the clan is a three or four generation group, the men and women who trace their descent to a common great-grandmother and who remember a village of origin (*cifulo*). These are not corporate matrilineages in any territorial sense. The kinship system makes for a great deal of movement from village to village during a man's or a woman's life. The villages themselves change in composition and move from place to place following the shifting cultivation.

There appear to be no fixed leaders of the matrilineage, except in the case of the royal dynasty, but this group is the unit of succession to the offices and the names of dead men and women and to their ancestral spirits.

[1] Cf. *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, p. 337.

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are solo performances with a definitely dramatic character, and are not round dances of the kind usually seen on the village ground of an evening.

Dancing among the Bemba is done for amusement, but it may be also done 'for respect'. Commoners will dance for their chief: a young man will dance for an older woman or man; a senior man may dance for a senior woman of his wife's family. In such dances of respect it is common for the soloist to dance in front of the person he wants to honour, and to sing definitely to him or her. It is particularly respectful to dance with vitality and dash. I have frequently heard headmen rebuking a crowd of bedraggled young women brought out to dance for me in the rain. The phrase was always the same: 'Rejoice, can't you? Do you want people to think we have no respect? Go on, there! Try to rejoice.' In the chisungu ceremony this type of dance of respect is as important a way of carrying out obligations as the provision of food and beer. It is no mere accident that the chisungu is described as 'dancing the girl'.

The mimes representing domestic and agricultural life are usually more serious performances. They sometimes involve real play-acting and the exact imitation of the animal or the behaviour of the person concerned. In most cases, however, what I have described as mimes are formalized representations of an action, such as pounding grain or sowing seeds, and they tend to resemble the rather stereotyped movements of a kindergarten singing game in this country.

The term 'sacred emblem' is used throughout this account. I have selected this word to translate a Bemba word, *mbusa*, which means 'things handed down'. The *mbusa* are of various types, but they may all be considered as secret in the sense that they either have a secret name or a secret meaning. They are of three types. The first of these are the pottery emblems. These are a series of models of common objects made of fired clay, usually painted with white, black and red. Some of them represent domestic objects (a water pot, a hoe or a pipe), some animals or birds (a crocodile or an egret), some are fertility symbols, and some represent historical characters. Many of them are realistically modelled and easily recognizable, while others are conventional pot designs each with a name. A certain number of designs are common over the whole

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district although there is individual variation in their modelling, while others seem to be of local distribution. I made a collection of about forty-three myself, but think there are likely to be twice that number either made or still remembered in the Bemba country. Each of the pottery emblems has its name and its song.[1]

Larger models of unfired clay decorated with beans, soot, chalk and red dye, are also made in the chisungu hut during the ceremony, and destroyed the same evening. They include, for instance, an enormous snake the coils of which cover the whole floor, a figure of a man and a woman, and lion made of logs covered with clay and with a head of hair. These are also described as *mbusa*.

The second type of *mbusa* are the wall designs. These are rough designs painted on the inside of the initiation hut at a certain stage in the ceremony. Most of them are conventional patterns with names and secret interpretations. Nine of these designs were used in the ceremony I saw, but Brelsford has recorded twenty others.

The third type of emblem consists of small bundles of objects representing the domestic life of the Bemba, that is to say, essential food of the tribe, such as millet, sorghum, meat, dried fish and salt, as well as fire wood, snuff and the red camwood dye known as *nkula*. Certain groups of trees used in the ceremony are also known as *mbusa*.

THE CEREMONY

The chisungu ceremony that I attended started at Cisonde village near Chinsali on June 1st, 1931. Chinsali is a Government station. It consisted at the time of two European officials' houses,

[1] H. Cory has collected many hundreds of these figurines from Tanganyika tribes. His book, shortly to be published, gives an account of their distribution, together with a number of illustrations. See also his 'Figurines used in the initiation ceremonies of the Nguu of Tanganyika', *Africa*, vol. XIV, No. 8, 1944. The Venda, Lovedu, and Vandau of Portuguese East Africa also use figurines. Schofield considers the Bemba figures similar to the pottery images found at Zimbabwe, cf. 'Pottery images or mbusa used at the chisungu of the Bemba people of North-Eastern Rhodesia', *South African Journal of Science*, vol. XLI, Feb. 1945.

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unalterable prerogatives of age. As a man's arm-pit can never be higher than his shoulder so the younger can never be more important than the older.

Preparation of the emblem bundles

Bundles of domestic emblems were now made up. These consisted of things commonly used in daily life—firewood, salt, meat, tobacco, the various seeds used in cooking, red cam wood powder, twigs of trees with magic properties and particularly of the woman's trees (*mwenge*, *mufungu* and *musuku*).

There followed an interminable series of songs. The initiation candidates hung uncomfortably from the branches of the tree, while beneath the emblems were offered, taken in the mouth and honoured by each of the women in turn, the company singing over and over again:

> '*Let me pick it up*
> *Let me pick it up with my mouth.*
> *My mbusa.*' (*No.* 14)

At last, the girls were brought down from the tree and with five or six of the younger helpers they were told to lead a round dance. They were shy, tied and awkward, and the dance went lamely. It was evidently important, however, that an impression of jollity should be given for the older women sat round them screeching vehemently, 'Rejoice, can't you? You girls, why can't you manage to rejoice?' Asked why this was necessary, Nangoshye said shortly, 'They must do it for respect.'

The mock bridegrooms

It was now between one and two o'clock, and we turned to go back to the village. As we went, two women dashed across the front of the procession shouting. They had armed themselves with toy bows and arrows and had tied twigs round their heads. They had leaf cups similar to those of the fish trap ceremony hung all over them. They were shouldering a long sapling on which hung a piece of ant-hill to represent a load. They had stained themselves all over with the red powder.

These were the sisters of the bridegrooms and they were greeted

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pleasure and confidence. It seemed to be the ritual acknowledgement of the mother's duty to provide food and to cook for her married daughter for some years after the wedding has taken place.)

The mock bridegrooms suddenly reappeared, pretending this time to be lame old men who could hardly walk. Again the same delighted screams of, 'Here are the *shibwinga*' and the shouted badinage with the mock old men, who came this time with horns of leaves on their heads. The company started singing a song about fetching salt.[1]

The whole procession danced three times round the girls who stood in the centre with downcast eyes. Then the crowd moved off to sing in front of the house of the bridegroom's (classificatory) mother. His own mother lived in a village elsewhere.

The hidden emblems

We then turned back to the chisungu hut where another type of *mbusa* had been hidden in the hut roof. Presents such as copper bangles would have been used in the old days, but on this occasion heads of millet were thought sufficient. The women all pretended to look for the *mbusa* while singing a song. (No. 16)

'*You look for a little snake for me on the roof.*'[2]

The test of maturity

We crowded into the hut in which the fire had been extinguished preparatory to its ritual relighting later in the day. Two large water pots were set on the floor and into each was put one of the

[1] *Subsequent interpretations.* The explanations were particularly contradictory in this case, and they were instructively so. A youngish and knowledgeable *nacimbusa* said the horns were to keep off witchcraft. They were to imitate the horns of the witch-doctor. The mock bridegrooms pretended to be old to show that the girls were to learn 'to grow up with their husbands and never to despise them'. An old woman said, 'Yes, the women are imitating the witch-doctors, those who know how to give parenthood (*bufyashi*)'. R.B.M. explained, 'It is to teach the bridegroom that even though he is old and tired he must look after the girl. Also, however ridiculous he is made to appear in the eyes of the world he must still do his duty'. A young girl, obviously considering the question for the first time, said 'It is good for a husband to be old. It is nice to marry a young man, but then he only goes off to the mines and leaves you alone. An old husband will stay behind and make you a garden.'

[2] A.C. 'You must plan for dangers ahead, i.e. the snake unexpectedly in the roof.'

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older in order of seniority, from the initiated women to the girls. It was a display of ceremonial obligation, of precedence, of *mucinci*, to use the common Bemba term. The younger helpers danced with the porridge bowls on their heads while the *banacisungu* were pushed in backwards, again on all fours, to the singing of the entering-in song (No. 15). The porridge bowls were ceremonially uncovered and covered again with ululation. The girls' paternal relatives seised the dishes and offered them to all present in order of seniority. The bowls were then put on the girls' own heads and they were made to dance round with them to show their respect to the *banacimbusa* present.

Singing games followed. The two senior paternal relatives of the girls pretended to chase each other off a small stool with Nangoshye scolding them and the company singing, 'Don't sit on the stool.' (No. 26) This was said to represent the Bemba custom of chasing the Shimwalule, the official burier of the Citimukulu from office after he had performed the mortuary ritual required of him.[1]

The same two old women next pretended to hunt and spear fish under the porridge bowl. This was explained as, 'The girl tries to hide food from her mother-in-law and asks her friends to keep the matter dark.'

Nangoshye picked up a porridge bowl pretending it was too heavy to carry. The women sang about a bat (No. 25) who represents the woman who goes out to hunt for lovers in the dark. They also sang another song about the hawk who pounces down on food without ceremony—which no girl should do. (No. 26)[2]

The girls were then made to touch each bowl all over and each lid was again picked off in a woman's mouth and offered to each elder in order of precedence. The oldest paternal aunt, Nacitembo (see page 62) then gave each girl a small lump of porridge and took it back; she then hid some of the porridge on the roof.

The hidden *mbusa* were now to be shown to the company. Nacitembo, as the oldest woman present and the representative of the father's side of one girls' families, danced holding the small

[1] *Subsequent Bemba interpretation* (A.C.). A woman must not sit on a stool in the presence of her elders.

[2] A.C. interprets No. 25: 'Evening is the time for play but wait until the housework is over before chatting with friends.'

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The Ceremony

balls of porridge filled with the domestic emblems. The two girls were stood against the wall under their own wall marks. Paternal relatives stood one on each side of them and passed the balls with the hidden emblems from side to side across them. This was to make them free to eat all the foods. It was, in other words, the removal of the girls' food taboos.

The company burst into song which goes with the representation of the washing of the husband's hands, (see page 202) and the girls' hands were washed. The paternal aunt danced out in front and kept pretending to show the hidden *mbusa* to the girls and fighting with Nangoshye who pretended reluctance to let them be seen.

The endless giving and taking came suddenly to an end in one of those dramatic moments that move even the weariest onlooker. The women broke into a song of unusual melody (No. 41):

Cibale! Cibale!
Come and wash your husband!
You ignorant creature,
Go and draw water,
Cibale! Cibale!

A younger *nacimbusa*, dancing with great vitality and charm, bent as though to pour water on the hands of every woman present in order of the assembled hierarchy. She pretended to whitewash the floor beneath each and bowed low to clap obeisance.

The company were roused to excitement immediately. To my questions they whispered: 'That is respect!' 'That is how the woman honours her husband. That is how he knows she has been taught. If a woman does not know how to wash her husband's hands, he will say, "That is not a woman. She is like someone who hasn't been danced!" ' (*Canakashi! Cabanga bashicindile!*)

The tension seemed to break. The ceremony was over. The porridge was divided up in a business-like way and each family took its portion. There was scrapping about the size of the bowls and a general return to normal life.

In the late afternoon, dancing began again and at night the teasing of the girls went on once more. One girl cried at once and

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was applauded. The other girl was throughout more stocky and reserved. A woman said to me: 'Well, we can't give her up! We must go on and on trying to teach her.'

TWELFTH DAY

This was a blank day. Nangoshye declared herself insulted and went off to reap her own fields. She had plenty to eat, as was clear to anyone sitting in a tent near her hut; but the relatives did not bring her enough 'dishes of respect'. 'They neglect me,' she went off grumbling.[1]

In the evening the pottery emblems were piled with branches, scattered with leaves of the magic *mufungu* tree, and fired.

THIRTEENTH DAY

This was another quiet day. In the morning, Nangoshye and her helpers went to inspect the pile of pottery emblems still covered with smouldering ashes.

The snake

In the afternoon a new pottery figure was made in the hut. It was an immense snake (*yongolo*). The clay was smoothed into coils that circled round the floor of the hut with a tail on the fire-stands against one wall and a head rearing up the opposite wall. Again the work was heavy and lasted two or three hours. There was the puddling of the clay outside the hut, the fetching of gourd and bean seeds and the meticulous arrangement of seeds along every coil of the snake's body. There was the same concentrated air about the women and the sense of a fight against time, but the same unwillingness to shorten the work at all.

(The women were reluctant to speak of the meaning of this emblem. 'It's just a snake' several said impatiently. Another added, 'It is to teach her not to deceive her husband.' On question, Nangoshye looked down with great embarrassment and said, 'Yes, it is a sign of manhood.'[2]

[1] "*Bonsula*". *Ukusula* is to despise, neglect, or fail to acknowledge a person's rights.

[2] *Subsequent Bemba interpretation.* P. B. M. commented afterwards that it was not an ordinary snake. It was a *pongolo*, a very rare snake. It was to teach the girl that unexpected things might happen. She must support them all patiently.

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the exclusion of the functions the rite performs for the individual, the role aspirant, as I have called her here.

Another device which is prominent in the chisungu is of course the mechanism of the sacred emblem and its associated formula. This ritual pattern is also very common in ceremonies intended for the passing on of roles or of systems of values. In the chisungu a series of related ideas are associated with certain symbols, the pottery figurines, and with fixed forms of words, the doggerel rhymes that are sung. This is a very interesting mechanism and one that is of very wide use in Bantu Africa as Cory and others have shown.[1] First it is evident that the designs and the pottery emblems form a sort of *aide-mémoire*. Women started to hum the songs when they saw the *mbusa*, as I observed myself when watching the making of the pottery figurines. Mrs. Culwick was told specifically by a Bena woman that the models were useful to make women remember the songs.

It became clear to me also in the course of Bemba village life that the figurines not only act as mnemonics for the songs but that they also come to represent moral attitudes and obligations and to represent them in a quotable form. I have heard a line of such a rhyme shouted by a girl's mother to an idle bride as a form of rebuke. On an occasion when a young married woman was tempted to go off to a beer-drink and leave her baby unguarded in the hut behind, an older woman suddenly shouted to her the song associated with the house *mbusa* (cf. Appendix B, No. 51). This song calls to mind the moral tale of the mother who leaves her baby alone in the house so that it falls into the fire and gets burnt. The girl in question looked irritated and impatient, and then shrugged her shoulders, gave up her project and went inside her house. In such circumstances the chisungu rhymes enable the Bemba to give formal expression to public morality. In other words the seemingly meaningless doggerel becomes a weapon. Bemba women recognize this as is shown from the comment made on the crocodile model. 'The girl will remember "that is what they taught me by the crocodile".'

[1] Cf. H. Cory, 'Figurines used in the initiation ceremonies of the Nguu of Tanganyika', *Africa*, vol. XIV, 1943–4. Such figurines also occur among the Bena. Cf. A. T. and G. C. Culwick, *Ubena of the Rivers*, 1944.

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The Interpretation of the Ceremony

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Another interesting feature of the emblem mechanism is that it provides a fixed form, a model and a song with the possibility of multiple meanings in this case. It is in the nature of symbols, whether they occur in dreams, speech or action, to become the centre of a cluster of different associations. The efficacy of ritual as a social mechanism depends on this very phenomenon of central and peripheral meanings and on their allusive and evocative powers. It makes possible interpretations that vary with the age, the knowledge and even the temperament of individual performers. The essential fact about the *mbusa* is not their exact meaning but the fact that they are what they are—'things handed down'—Hence they act as signs that things will go on as they have gone on, and that powers given to mankind before will be given to them again. They are used as the basis of rites of charter maintenance.[1] I have pointed out that one of the striking aspects of the chisungu I witnessed was the insistence that the designs should be modelled exactly, even though the work involved hours of tedious labour. This was so even in the case of the pottery snakes and other symbols made in clay on the floor of the initiation hut, which were destroyed on the evening of the day on which they were made. This insistence on exact detail in, for instance, the spacing of the beans and pumpkin seeds that decorated the emblems, was combined with a variety of explanations of the symbols used. The interpretation of the songs given in the appendices show that there is in every case at least one double meaning for each symbol. The hoe represents the woman's gardening duties but it also represents the husband who makes his wife fertile. The miming dances round the *musuku* tree are done 'to honour the *musuku*', the women's tree, and women said that if they failed to do these actions there would be no parenthood. But there was also a reference to the woman's duty to get firewood now that she was married. Another set of ideas centred round the blessing of the girls' emblems that were tied to the tree and handled with the women's mouths. 'We bless them with our spittle.' Here a variety of meanings is loosely associated: the tree that bears much fruit and hence symbolizes fertility, the tree that provides wood used for firewood, the honouring of the tree with spittle by which the

[1] I give the term charter the meaning that Malinowski did.

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ancestors' blessings are conveyed. Another example is that of the tortoise who breaks the habits of a lifetime, not only by climbing trees but by climbing them backwards as the girls are asked to do. The mime represents the unusual thing, the woman who is ready to do her husband's work if he is away and other difficult or almost impossible tasks. She is also to be like the tortoise who puts his head under his shell, in that she is to keep silent about her relations with her husband. But she is also taught that she is not to be like the tortoise who puts his head out looking for food when he is in other people's houses, but keeps his head inhospitably in when he is in his own house—in other words does not tell his guests he has supplies of food. (Appendix B, No. 50.) Such interpretations show how the same symbol can at one and the same time represent the thing that must be done, and the thing that must not be done.

As in dream life the symbols of the chisungu evoke a variety of linked associations, verbal and other. The salt, the firewood, or the curious figurines stand for certain emotional associations common to the whole community, but they may also acquire special meanings in the light of that particular ceremony, or even in terms of individual experience. The 'secret' meanings of the *mbusa* were, as we saw, gradually learnt by the more intelligent women through a series of subsequent repetitions, questions, answers and guesses. But the more obvious interpretations of a representative rite could change with the times. For instance, the miming of the bridegroom as an old man with horns on his head was described by older women as a representation of a witch doctor who has charms for the fertility of women; but a young girl explained the matter in practical terms as showing that it is 'sensible to marry an old man nowadays since he will not go away to the mines and leave you stranded'.

All symbolic objects make it possible to combine fixity of form with multiple meanings, of which some are standardized and some highly individual. Long and complex ritual of the chisungu type inevitably represents a cluster of ideas, understood, half-understood or merely felt. Mimetic rites or the use of designs or figurines are an admirable mechanism for conveying such associated notions, and moral concepts.

A legal contract of marriage defines the behaviour expected of

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Songs Sung During the Ceremony

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Ualele cisungu, — You have slept with the chisungu child, [539]

Ualele nkalamo. — You have slept with the lion.

Interpretation. It is dangerous to sleep with a girl after puberty. It is like the danger of the lion. The young man is warned not to sleep with his bride without the right precautions.

II

The songs that follow are those which are sung when the girl is presented with her pottery figurines.[1] The majority of the songs are given here, but omissions have been made when the meaning of the song is very obscure. 881X 533 778

[532]

Fig. 1. *The bracelet*

No. 38. *The bracelet* (*likosa*) Fig. 1. This is a model of a bracelet. It is put over the wrist of the girl, or else swung in her hand. The following words are sung:

Kampele mulume, — It was given me by my husband, [539]

Akakaŋanda. — The little house.

Mayo tambene! — Mother look at it!

Interpretation. It is the husband's duty to clothe his wife and the bracelet represents this obligation. The betrothal present (*nsalamo*) is also usually a bracelet. The initiate is ritually clothed with bracelets made of grass at the end of the chisungu when she is ceremonially bathed in the river (p. 109). Hence the girl calls her mother to look at what her husband has given her, i.e. the bracelet, [584]

[1] The collection I made for the museums of the Universities of Johannesburg and Cape Town differ slightly from that seen at Cisonde village. The former have been described by Schofield. Op. cit.

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881 533 778 and thus she hints that the time has come for her to be given to her husband. The song can apparently also be translated as 'Go and give me to my husband'.

[532]

Fig. 2. The necklet beads (2 forms—one representing the whole conus shell and one the triangular discs made from it to be used as beads of a necklace).

[301] *No. 39. The necklet bead* (*mpande*) (Fig. 2). Two forms are used in the chisungu ceremonies—the whole conus shell as shown in the drawing or a triangular section such as the Bemba regularly wear as neck ornaments. There are many historical associations with such shells. They are, for instance, placed on the body of the dead paramount chief when he is buried.

In the chisungu the model of the bead, strung on bark string, was swung to and fro by the mistress of the ceremony while the company sang:

[539]

Mpande yandi,	My mpande bead,
Yapona kwi sano.	It has fallen in the chief's court.

Interpretation. There was considerable unanimity in explanation here. Informants all agreed that the *mpande* represented the wife. If the husband has wronged his wife so that she runs back to her own family, then he has lost his head. To get his wife back he must approach his relatives-in-law with great circumspection and must bring presents as he would if he had let something fall in a chief's courtyard. This is a typical example of the allusive use of a couple of doggerel lines to refer to a marriage obligation. The *mpande* shell is also used as a vagina symbol in some parts of Africa. This meaning was not specifically mentioned to me by Bemba informants.

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Songs Sung During the Ceremony

No. 40. *The star* (*ntanda*) (Fig. 3). This is a big pot with a narrow mouth and perforated sides. A lighted taper is put inside so

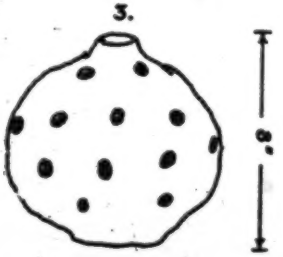

Fig. 3. *The Star* (*with perforations so that a lighted taper will burn inside*).

that it shines out to represent star-light. A pottery lid is then fitted on top and the initiated girl must balance it on her head, if possible with the torch remaining alight inside. The company sings:

Ulekashye ntanda bushiku;	You gaze at the stars at night;
Ulantuka ukashika.	You revile me obscenely.

Interpretation. Here there seems to be a complicated double meaning, and probably more than two. Women answered questions about this figurine with shame and hesitation. They said that the light which shone through was the blood inside the woman, which it is so terrible to display. *Ukashika* is to be grave, weighty but also to become red. The most horrible curse a man can use is to swear by the menstruation of his wife. It is a thing which a woman can hardly bring herself to whisper in explanation. The surface meaning is, however, given cheerfully. However badly a husband swears at his wife, she must not answer back. This is a typical example of words with a readily repeatable meaning and concealed associations known as 'things underneath' (*fintu fya panshi*).

No. 41. *The little spoon* (*kakombo*) (Fig. 4). The initiate stands opposite the 'bridegroom' on the last night of the ceremony.[1] She pretends to pour water on 'his' hands with the model of the spoon

[1] Represented by his sister.

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and to rub the floor beneath as though she were muddying it over. All sing:

Cibale! Cibale!	Cibale! Cibale!
Kasambe mulume,	Go and wash your husband,
We cinangwa!	You ignorant (uninitiated) creature!
Na panshi ulala (*or utota*),	And to the ground make obeisance,
We cinangwa!	You ignorant creature!
Cibale! Cibale!	Cibale! Cibale!

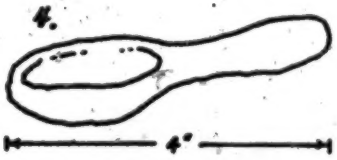

Fig. 4. The Spoon.

Interpretation. Here the meaning was clear and the actions representative. The girl here imitates in song her part in the ceremony of purification after intercourse. She takes water from her little marriage pot and pours it on her husband's hands. The initiated girl knows how important it is to do this but not the girl who is a weed, or an uncultivated plant, because she has not been danced. Cibale is a legendary figure.

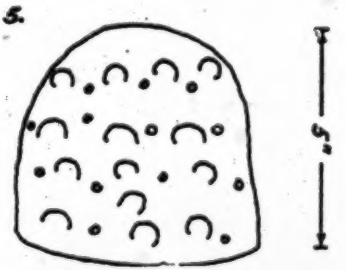

Fig. 5. The man with the plumed head dress worn on the 'bridegroom's' head.

No. 42. The man with the plumed head-dress (*waume ua ngala*) (Fig. 5). This helmet-like model was worn by the female represen-

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tative of the bridegroom, who balanced it on her head while the girl was washing her hands as above. They sing:

Mwansa Cembe!	Mwansa Cembe! (twice)
Mwansa Cembe!	
Mulume wa ngala waisa.	The husband with the plumed head-dress has come.

Interpretation. Mwansa Cembe is a legendary figure in whom no one seemed to show much interest. The song itself was sung with great excitement (see p. 86). The husband comes wearing the plumed head-dress which was given by the chief to brave warriors. He comes in triumph. The girl kneels to him. 'It is to show honour to the husband. The girl must praise him.'

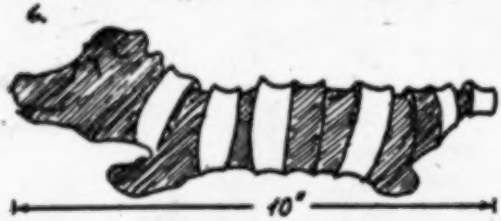

Fig. 6. The crocodile (the tail was here broken off in firing).

No. 48. The crocodile (*yweno*) (Fig. 6). The girl holds the crocodile figurine in her hand and the company sing:

Luyamba,	Crocodile,
Uikata ku matete.	You have caught in the rushes.
Nani shyaleka ku matete?	Who has been left in the rushes?
Luyamba.	Crocodile!

Interpretation. The crocodile, for which *luyamba* is an archaic term, is the emblem of the royal clan. There seem to be varied, or else obscure, meanings attached to this *mbusa*. One woman said it was given the girl 'to honour the chief'; another that it was to teach her not to dally by the river at night. An educated man said that the song meant that the husband is a member of the royal crocodile clan, i.e. a chief, since he provides everything for the home and is the protector. The rushes are the offences which a woman may commit by breaking the marriage vow on revealing

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the secrets of the home. The young woman must look out for the husband who may be waiting like a crocodile to seize her.

No. 44. *The garden mound* (*mputa*) (Fig. 7. See also p. 97). This figurine was balanced on the girl's head while the company sang:

Mwibala,	Through the garden,
Teti mupite muntu,	No man must pass,
Nga apita ni muka mwaume.	If it is the wife of the man who has passed.

Interpretation. Here again, we have multiple meanings and, to the European at least, great obscurity. The model is a representation of the round garden mounds which it is specifically the woman's duty to cultivate. One informant said glibly, 'No one

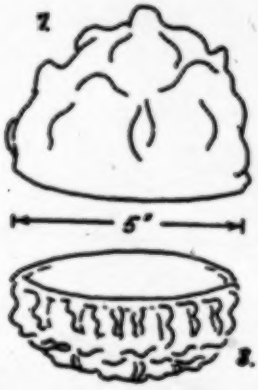

Fig. 7. *The garden mound.*
Fig. 8. *The garden.*
Both used in the second woodland ceremony.

must take a woman's garden.' But the *mputa* represents a cultivated and owned place, e.g. a chief's garden in which it is tabooed to have sex intercourse. 'The married woman is like a garden through which a man should not pass when he knows the girl is someone else's wife. If others respect his wife, he should do the same to theirs.'

No. 45. *The gardens* (*Amabala*) (Fig. 8. See also p. 96). This is one of the *mbusa* carried out into the bush for one of the cere-

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monies (p. 92). The women dance round it after a rite centring round the offering of the different seeds of the tribe to the elders in order of rank.

Interpretation. I have no song and no satisfactory interpretation. Women said the *mbusa* was shown to the girl to teach her to garden.

Fig. 9. The Clan. (The basket which is swung in a girl's hand, while the man's family is the crown worn on her head.)

No. 46. The clan (*mukoa*) (Fig. 9). This is a model of a basket with a handle. The girl swings it by one hand while she balances on her head a pot shaped like a helmet, as shown in Fig. 5. The company sing:

Cupo asenda pa mutwe;	She carries her marriage on her head;
Uaseshya mukoa.	Her clan is dangling in her hand.

Interpretation. There seemed to be no difficulty about this *mbusa*. Informants told me at once that since the girl was married she had to put her in-laws in a place of honour above the members of her clan, i.e. on her head; the clan relatives must be swung below in the girl's hand.

No. 47. The hoe (*lukasu*) (Fig. 10). The girls pretend to be hoeing a garden. They sing:

Nimpa kalonde.	Give me my little hoe (archaic).
Ndea ku mabala.	I go to the gardens.
Kabala kalala.	The little gardens of the ground-nuts.

or

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Appendix B

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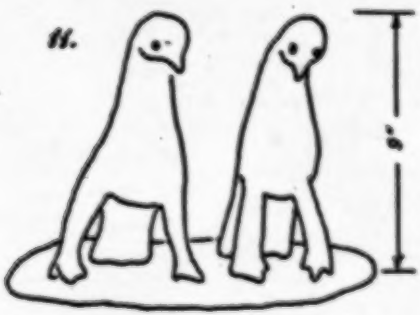
Nimpa kalonde. Give me my little hoe,
Nsebaule kongwe. So that I can make ready the hymen.
Mulume wamona. You have seen your husband.

[532]

Fig. 10. *The Hoe.*

[196] *Interpretation.* Here is a good example of different layers of meaning. First the initiate is to work hard at hoeing. Another rational explanation was that the girl was to be taught how to hoe when pregnant without hurting herself. Then a woman said, with a gesture and a wink, the girl would be hoed up by her husband as the ground is. The second of the two rhymes has a frankly sexual meaning—the girl wants to be given to her husband.

[532]



No. 11. *The egret* (*nkoba*) (*the white bird associated with the magic of whitening or cleansing*).

No. 48. *The egret* (*nkoba*) (Fig. 11). The company sings:

We kakoba! We koni! You little egret! You bird!
Shimwalaba mpemba. Do not forget the whitewash.

or

Nkoba yandi yapwa, My digging stick is finished;
Yalobela mwibala. It is lost in the garden.

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Songs Sung During the Ceremony

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Interpretation. There is a play on words here. *Nkoba* is the white bird to which the girl is likened during the ceremony of the whitening magic. The *nkoba* is also a small digging stick used as a rake.

[532]

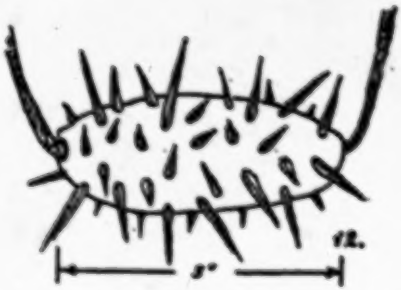

Fig. 12. *The porcupine (worn round the girl's neck to prick her if she did wrong before her initiation).*

No. 49. *The porcupine* (*chinungi*) (Fig. 12). This is a small rod of clay stuck with spines and threaded with string. It is put round the neck of the girl like a necklace and she has to swing it to and fro so that the spines prick her on the breast and neck. They sing.

Cinungi posa matamba,	Porcupine throw the waves (spines)
Kulya twalilwa na mubemba.	We are benighted by the lake.

[539]

Interpretation. It was supposed that the girl who had deceived her bridegroom was hurt by the spines, and that this showed her what her husband would do to her when she was married. Nkonde comments: 'Wrongs are never hidden. They come to light one day.'

[535]

Fig. 13. *The tortoise.*

No. 50. *The tortoise* (*fulwe*) (Fig. 13). The women jog up and down and mime a tortoise putting its head in and out. They sing:

Fulwe pa fyakwe,	The tortoise when it is at home,
Aingishya mukoshi;	Puts in its head;
Mu cifwambaka.	Into its shell.

[539]

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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Appendix B

Interpretation. You know the kind of woman who is reticent about food in her own house for fear she may have to distribute it; that is to say she puts her head under her shell. But when she is in other people's houses she puts out her head and looks into this pot and that so that she may get offered food. The girl must be hospitable.

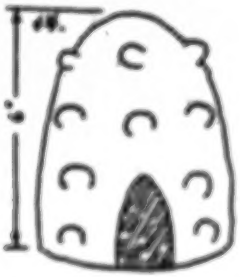

Fig. 14. *The house* (*used with a miniature door of reeds which pulls in and out*).

No. 51. *The house* (*yanda*) (Fig. 14). This is an ingenious model. It has a loose door made of reeds which pulls in and out on a string while the accompanying song is sung:

Mwana alelila,	The child is crying,
Nshisalile uko alele,	I did not see where it lay.
Tandabula.	The door is swinging.

Interpretation. This song seemed to point an important moral. Women told me impressively that it was to teach the girl how to look after her baby. The child referred to in the song is crying because the door is left swinging, i.e. it is open because the mother has gone to a beer-drink and left her baby alone. (*Kutandabula* also means to chatter.)

No. 52. *The mortar* (*kabende*) (Fig. 15). The initiate is given a pestle and made to imitate the pounding of grain and to sing:

Kabende kandi,	My little mortar,
Kamekelo.	I will show it off.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

or alternatively told her that she would take the first child if her daughter had a second one. But she was tricking her and now the girl has two babies to look after. The moral stressed is the duty of refusing intercourse with the husband before the baby is weaned, i.e. at the second or third year. This is the common Bemba practice.

No. 54. The pregnant woman (*mwanakashi*) (Fig. 17). The song is:

Kasuba kasuba;	The sun has set;
Kasuba kaeli aya.	The sun has already gone.
Nshiku shyafula;	The days are fulfilled;
Kanshindama mumuku ila.	Let me go and honour the *mumuku* tree.

Interpretation. The *mumuku* tree bears fruit and stands for fertility. The pregnant woman is also wrapped in its bark. Nangoshye explained the song by saying, 'the days are over; my time has come to give birth.'

No. 55. The man who is a fool. This is a model of a low helmet-shaped pot which the candidate puts on her head singing:

Mwe mwaume,	You man,
Shiwamela-e!	You are a fool!
Ntanta mutima.	You have no courage.

Interpretation. The man should look after his wife but he does not do so.

No. 56. The young man walking smartly. This is a figure of a jaunty young man all dressed up. The song is:

We kalamendo!	You little young man!
Shicenda mukola!	Who walks so smartly!
Baiza.	They have come.

Interpretation. This was said to be the son-in-law who has gone to get hoes for the marriage; or alternatively, in modern idiom, who has gone to work for the Europeans. One informant said that the song implied that the dressed-up man idling about the village does not always get the bride he wants; another that the girl has insisted on marrying the smart young man but he has gone away and left her.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Songs Sung During the Ceremony

No. 57. The man without arms. Cilume ca ciboa (Fig. 18). This is the man with an enormous male organ but no arms. He lazes about the house finding fault with his wife, but he does not do any work or sit with his fellows making nets or baskets in the men's shelter. The husband who 'just sits' seems to be comparable to the *cipuba*, the girl who takes no pride in her domestic duties and knows nothing (p. 88).

No.18. The lazy man who has no arms to work.

No. 58. The lion (*mundu*) (See pp. 106, 129). This is the largest and most elaborate of the *mbusa*. One of the projections at the side is hollow so that a roaring noise is made by blowing down it. It is used on the last day of the ceremony to imitate the roaring of the lion which is likened to the husband.

No. 59. The pipe (*piper*). The women pretend to smoke like Europeans do.

The girl is told she is not to smoke all day and to neglect her duties.

No. 60. Sonsa nkalamo. This is a model like a tree with clay projections on it. The song tells the woman to run in answer to a summons or to be obedient to her husband, according to men informants. Women, on the other hand, say that it tells the husband to honour the wife!

No. 61. The hearthstones (*amafwasa*). The girl stands on this initiation hearthstone and pretends to balance a pot on it.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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Some informants said the girl was to be taught cooking; and others that the hearthstones represented the settled married life.

No. 62. The pot (*mutondo*). The girl is to carry water and look after the house.

No. 63. The cardinal bird (*kabangula*). This is a small white bird with red spots on it. It represents the *nacimbusa*, since it has a red crest like the plumes of the *nacimbusa* in old days.

No. 64. The hyena (*cimbwi*). The girl is told not to steal like the hyena.

No. 65. Cibone Mfumbu. This is a conical-shaped model covered with small projections.

It is said to represent a tree and it is also the name of the beautiful head-wife of a legendary chief. The husband is to look upon his wife as the most beautiful of all women just as the chief preferred his head-wife to all others.

No. 66. The centipede (*congolo*). This is an animal about six inches long like an enormous caterpillar, which appears with the rains. The *congolo* has many legs.

The song warns the girl to perform purification after twins; or, according to another account, she is warned not to have intercourse too frequently or she will have twins—multiple births like the many legs of the caterpillar.

624 blessing the gardens before firing, the seeds before sowing, and the first fruits of a number of crops. He must organise the payment of tribute and labour to the district chief and pass on chiefly orders and requests. His privileges include the right to personal service from younger relatives and tribute of beer and/or meat. Primarily, however, the position is valued not for economic advantage but for the authority it brings, the command over a small following and the favour of a chief. The sanctions for this authority consist mainly in the headman's popularity, the strength of kinship ties between him and the villagers and their belief that it is dangerous to allow an elder relative to die while cherishing a sense of injury. Ultimately, of course, the headman's power depends on the support of his territorial chief and nowadays of the British Administration.

621 The functions of the different types of Bemba chief differ only in de-
622 gree from those of the headman. Like a headman, a chief is in charge of his own village, his *musumba*, and he tries to maintain and augment this community by acquiring a reputation for popularity and generosity. A chief's village in the old days was described as having thousands of inhabitants. Big chiefs' villages observed by Richards in 1934 had 400 to 600 huts. They were divided into quarters (*fitente*) ruled over by loyal supporters of the chief, known as *bafilolo*.

622 Besides administering his own village the chief was responsible for mak-
[692] ing and confirming the appointment of headmen; and presiding over a court
[681] composed of advisers mainly drawn from his own village. Witchcraft cases had to be brought to a chief and only the more important among them could administer the poison ordeal by *mwafi*. The chief could in the old days punish by savage mutilations and by selling a man into slavery. Economically the chief was responsible for initiating agricultural activities by performing the necessary rite at the time of tree-cutting, sowing or harvesting.
[721] With the tribute labour at his disposal he made big gardens and built granaries from which he fed his courtiers, messengers and workers. The chief initiated military raids and other forms of warfare, and the great Bemba chiefs maintained their monopoly of Arab guns which they traded for slaves. Bemba country was, in fact, an area of strong centralised government. The chieftains of the Aushi, Unga and other associated tribelets were on a much smaller scale and weaker in political organisation.

[789] But the most important and characteristic activities of the Bemba chiefs are ritual. They are reckoned to have in their own persons power to bless
[763] and curse. They have to be protected from contact with death and to keep sex taboos of various kinds for the welfare of the whole territory. It is probable that the Bemba Paramount Chief in the old days might have been described as a "divine king" in Fraser's sense of the word; he was strangled
[763] when on the point of death so that his spirit should pass into the land. The Bemba chief derives his ritual power from the fact that he has succeeded to the names of dead chiefs and is thus enabled to call on a long line of ancestral spirits. Chiefs possess sacred relics - usually stools - which are
622 known as *bubenye* and kept in special huts protected by "wives of the dead"
●778 or descendants of wives of earlier chiefs. An approach to the ancestral spirits is made at these shrines. Chiefs also sacrifice at the deserted shrines of their predecessors (*mfuba*) and at other spirit centres in the area.

Much of their power depends on the keeping of sex taboos and the

622 protection from pollution of the fire which is supposed to burn day and
T78 night in a special hut, at any rate in the Paramount Chief's capital. An elaborate ritual concerns the protection of the sacred relics and the fire, and a number of hereditary officials are engaged in this task.

622 While all *chiefs* in this group seem to have ritual powers as heads of ancestral cults, and most of them possess and look after sacred relics, it appears that the ritual is far more highly developed among the Bemba. In fact, among some of the scattered groups on the western border of the district, there are cases where the spiritual ownership of the land is in the hands of a descendant of the original owner and the chief himself has diminished supernatural power, but further research on this point is required.

643 The Paramount Chief among the Aushi[1] held both secular and spiritual power in his own hands, a state which was interrupted from 1900-1930 by quarrels over the succession, during which there was both an administrative and a religious head of the group. This is the normal state of affairs among the Unga[2] where the Paramount Chief has never held spiritual or religious power.

Types of Chief

622 Bemba *chiefs* succeed to fixed titles associated with the possession of
643 sacred relics. The chieftainships are of different kinds. The major
644 titles are held by members of the royal dynasty and the royal princes succeed to one after the other of these titles in turn. For instance, for half a century or so there was a tendency for the Paramount Chief, the *Citimukulu*, to be succeeded by the *Nkoande*, who was in turn succeeded by the *Nkolesfumu* and the latter by the *Kipopo*.[3] The paramount chieftaincy and the major territorial chiefdoms are held by close relatives within the royal dynasty, usually own brothers, parallel cousins, classificatory brothers, or sisters' sons. Some of the territorial chiefs have under them sub-chiefs whom they appoint themselves and who are either royal princes, or in some cases "sons of chiefs". Several chiefdoms are regularly inherited by sons of chiefs rather than by members of the royal Crocodile clan, and it appears that, once a tract of land has been given by a chief to one of his sons it remains as a gift which the succeeding chief can give to his son rather than to his uterine nephew.

644 There are also at least two royal princesses, the *Candamukulu* and the
562 *Mukukanfumu*, who succeed to fixed titles in the same way and who rule over a group of villages rather than tracts of land. The position and power of the women of the Crocodile clan is one of the characteristic features of this area.

622 Lastly a few localised lines of chiefs, usually junior or ousted branches of the Crocodile clan, have established their rule over small

(1) Philpot, 1936; but in the Congo the Aushi have two chieftaincies or paramountcies. See Stidsen, 1936, p.59.
(2) Brelsford, I, 1946.
(3) After a protracted succession dispute the *Nkole* succeeded to the paramount chieftaincy recently; see Brelsford, I, 1946, and Richards, 7, 1940.

776 children to men and is the original source of magic power. *Lesa* is not, however, the object of any cult and is never directly addressed by the Bemba.(1) There is some suggestion that *Lesa* is believed to act as a judge of the dead, but it is not clear how far this is a reflection of Christian teaching.

[778] [825] Shrines are put up in Bemba country to a hunting god, *Kulenga*, thought to be the spirit of a forgotten ancestor. There are also traces of serpent worship in two or three centres in Bemba country where sacrifices are made to pythons believed to live in caves or near waterfalls.

The Aushi believe in *Mukumba*, a tribal god. While only chiefs and priests have seen him, he is generally thought to be small - about two feet in height - black and hard like stone. *Mukumba* is very closely bound up with the idea of paramountcy among the Aushi but is clearly much more than mere "insignia of office"; he is worshipped and offerings are made to him; he is conceived both as a god and as a person, and is served by his own priests and priestesses. His association with the history of Aushi has already been mentioned. (See above p.8.)

(b) THE ANCESTRAL CULT

769 Some reference has been made in preceding sections to the ancestral spirits. Many ceremonies are connected with them and the part played by ancestral spirits in general and those of chiefs, and especially of the Paramount Chief, is the core of Bemba religion. These spirits (*Mupashi*, pl. *Imipashi*) are worshipped on all the chief occasions of the agricultural year, particularly at tree-cutting and harvest time, and also in times of tribal disaster or emergency. It may be remarked in passing that the ritual practices associated with these occasions were formerly very elaborate but are now being carried out with diminishing ceremonial and by fewer people, even though the beliefs behind the practices still seem to be dominant in the minds of the people.

769 778 The *Imipashi* are to be approached in certain well-defined ways among which are the calling of their names, prayers, and offerings of material objects. They may be invoked at the following places: firstly, the hut of every householder serves as a shrine, since his own ancestral spirits tend to linger there in the half-light of dawn and dusk to be invoked at the crises of life: birth, marriage, illness and death. In some areas food is placed for their appeasement but there is not, as among the Ila, a separate part of the hut set aside for them. The focal point of religious activity in the village is the headman's hut or a small shrine built outside it. Here the spirits of the headman's ancestors are invoked in all matters concerning the wider welfare of the village. In some areas shrines are put up to the spirits of the former owners of the land who are addressed by the village headman.(2)

(1) The position described by Smith and Dale in *The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* is very similar.

(2) Among the Unga priests operate independently of the chief: the fusion of secular and spiritual authority is not so complete as it is among the Bemba. For details see Brelsford, 3, 1946, Chap.XI.

769 778 Spirits are also worshipped, as has been mentioned, at the chiefs' relic huts, at the sites of dead chiefs' villages, which are revered as spirit centres, and at remarkable natural objects such as caves and waterfalls (*ngulu*) which are also thought to be spirit centres. Major chiefs are buried in a sacred grove guarded with great care by a priest, the *shimalule*. [782] This is the home of the most powerful tribal spirits and an animal used to be sacrificed here on the rare occasions when drought was threatened. [787] The spirits of the chiefs also manifest themselves in the presence of possessed men and women who prophesy and heal. Ancestral spirits are approached by the man or woman who has succeeded to their name and guardian spirit, that is to say, the head of a small local lineage, a headman or a chief.

769 782 783 Ancestral spirits are addressed after a ritual sexual act between the officiant and his wife, followed by ceremonial purification. The spirits are addressed by name and some form of sacrifice, e.g. beer, cloth, flour and chickens, is offered to them.

(c) MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT

789 781 Bemba and Bisa believe in the potency of *buungo* which may be translated as "magic". Bemba magical rites depend for the most part on medicine (*muti*), usually part of a plant or tree, sometimes with the addition of energizing charms giving potency to the medicine. Words are sometimes used but, as with the Azande, there is less insistence on and less importance attached to the spell than to the rite and the medicines. It is the magician (*Ng'anga*) who procures and uses the medicine and from whom it may be purchased. To ensure effectiveness the *Ng'anga* must invoke *Leza*, without whose consent the medicines are thought to be ineffectual.

Magic is used for general protective purposes - to ensure fertility, good health and luck, to give staying power to food. In the economic sphere magic seems to be used less among the Bemba than the Bisa. Richards suggests that the greater development of the ancestral cult among the former is the reason for this.(1)

754 787 Magic is also used in divination. The commonest form of divination is the rubbing of an axe over a skin until it sticks in answer to a question, and boiling of medicine in a pot until the mixture bubbles over one side or the other side. Another characteristic form of Bemba divination is the hunting ritual used to ascertain the cause of a person's death, according to whether a male or female animal is first driven into the hunting nets. This rite can be used as a preliminary test for witchcraft. In the old days the *lilonga*, or war fetish, originally obtained from the Lunda chiefs near Lake Mweru was employed. This was a horn placed on a spike which was [278] thought only to work if smeared with the blood of a human victim. *Iboga*, the poison used as a test for witchcraft from the Southern Sudan to Southern Rhodesia, was used by the senior chiefs in this area.

754 Evil magic, or sorcery, was distinguished as *bulosshi*, a term which covers witchcraft, in the sense of inborn power, as well as the manipulation

(1) Richards, C, 1939, pp.156, 187.

pants from the contemplation of their loss he makes jokes at the expense of the dead man and behaves in a fashion which in other circumstances would be considered outrageous and would not be tolerated. 764

Kazembes considered themselves as potentially immortal; thus the death of a Kazembe was attributed to neglect of magical precautions against witchcraft.(1) According to Pinto, slaves and wives of a dead Kazembe were sacrificed and a ten-day period of authorized licence followed during which robberies were allowed.(2) 754 643 782

It was believed that the living and the dead could communicate. Life after death resembled that led while alive.(3) 775

RELIGIOUS AND MAGICAL BELIEFS AND RITUAL

The concept of the high-god Leza is common to the Bemba-speaking peoples. *Leza*, the creator, is regarded rather as a nature force than a personal deity and is not the object of an organised cult. He manifests himself in thunder, lightning, and the rainbow and can kill by lightning or epidemics, but generally interferes little. 776

The *ngulu*, nature spirits residing in animals, trees, stones, hills, caves, ponds, waterfalls, can bring good weather and crops and are prayed to in an emergency. This cult is of non-Lunda origin and has probably come from the Chishinga, Lunga and Bemba country. Most of the dwelling-places of these spirits are found on the escarpment hills and on the plateau. The *afumu ya mipashi* (chiefs of spirits), which can enter and possess people making them dance, are local deities whose beneficient activity is confined to the village or district. [177]

When the general well-being of the community was concerned the spirits of dead Kazembes, *mazemba*, were consulted and presented with offerings of cassava, beer and goats. Kazembes were buried at a place north-east of the old capital with which it was connected by a broad pathway(4) still discernible. Each had a shrine which was tended by a guardian-priest, *mutu mazemba*,(5) whose office was hereditary. These keepers of the royal graves sought the advice of the oracle when war was contemplated and invoked the assistance of the spirits.(6) The River Lualaba, in which Kazembe the founder of the dynasty rests, was held in veneration. Processions went there annually at harvesting time. It is said that Koloka was the first Kazembe who failed to lead the procession in person, and the famine and smallpox epidemic which later occurred were attributed to his negligence.(7) The Kazembe is said to have been the highest religious authority.(8) 769 643 764 778 731

Carved wooden figures representing dead ancestors (*nkozi*) were kept in special huts and received offerings of beer, cassava, flour, hemp and tobacco.(9) Kazembe had several such figures, some named after dead chiefs, which were carried before the army in battle.(10) 778 532 769

(1) Valdez, II, p.242.
(2) Burton, p.128.
(3) Valdez, op.cit., p.243.
(4) Valdez, II, p.231.
(5) Burton, p.103.
(6) Valdez, op.cit., p.248.
(7) Valdez, II,p.257.
(8) ibid., p.243.
(9) Livingstone, I, p.353.
(10) ibid.

791 778 The ng'anga (magicians) of whose activity little is known, dwelt in a banana grove just south of the capital which no outsiders could enter on pain of death.(1)

782 789 787 [726] Human sacrifices were made at the capital.(2) Victims were prisoners of war and, failing them, the Kazembe's own subjects. Human blood, hearts and entrails are mentioned among the ingredients of which medicines were made.(3) Horns containing medicine were supposed to give protection from witchcraft. Before any hazardous enterprise - war, hunting, travel - was undertaken, an oracle was consulted(4) and, if prospects looked auspicious, a medicine was prepared.(5)

264 643 787 The Kazembe was said to receive warnings of hostile machinations in dreams. If he dreamt of someone more than once this was a sign that the man was plotting against him and must be put to death.(6) Crawford was informed that the Kazembe was ritually insulted during his meals, and he describes this in some detail.(7) "The king eats in a mysterious mode called kapodio... The 'old doctors' cursed him while he ate, his face veiled: 'Kazembe should die! He is no man! A beast! Kill the beast, oh! son of Temena (his mother's name)' ". The mondo was sounded to let people know that Kazembe was having his meal, and no one else was allowed to eat at the same time.

834 783 Ritual cleansing is prescribed after sexual intercourse. A man who kills a lion has to be washed in nshipa medicine by the headman before he can enter the village, and may not eat or speak till this has been done.

226 789 [784] [834] A wealth of ritual attached to fishing. Ritual authority was vested in the Shila "owners of the land".(8) The ceremony of ukufungule sabi (unlocking the fish) was performed annually towards the middle of the dry season on all the waters except the Luapula which "belongs to God". Bits of medicine were attached to the nets in order to ensure a good catch and prevent the nets from being torn. Charms were worn by fishermen or suspended at the bows to protect the canoe from being capsized by hippo or crocodiles. When the canoe was first launched the women sprinkled it with a little cassava flour to ensure plentiful catches. A women, particularly when carrying a child, was forbidden to step over a net. Sexual relations were tabooed when the fish were being poisoned. Lake Mweru was apparently never crossed south of Kilwa island, according to Livingstone.(9) At the "cursing" ceremony on Lake Mweru the dead men drowned in the lake were called by name and reprimanded.(10) Those who came safe ashore after their boats had foundered were greeted with a deliverance song and led in a thanksgiving procession.(11)

(1) Gamitto, I, p.358.
(2) Pereira puts the number of human victims at twenty a day (Livingstone, I, p.265). This is probably no more trustworthy than is his statement that Kazembe's army numbered 20,000 trained soldiers. R.J. Moore discusses human sacrifices as if at the time he wrote (1937) they were still common and an essential part of the salt-making ritual. The victim, according to him, is "nowadays usually a child".
(3) Burton, p.126.
(4) ibid., p.228.
(5) ibid., p.128.
(6) Livingstone, I, p.277.
(7) Crawford, 2, p.104.
(8) Livingstone, op.cit., p.252.
(9) op.cit., p.269.
(10) Crawford, op.cit., p.105.
(11) ibid., pp.105-6.

B2 was killed by the Ngoni during a raid. Chimbabantu C5 was also captured by the Ngoni and taken away. So when Kasonde Mukukamfumu B2 was killed she had no sister to inherit, as Nakasafya B5 was also dead, and there were no granddaughters then. So the descent went to Mandechanda C8, a niece (classificatory daughter) and she became Mukukamfumu III.

Chimbabantu C5 had been captured when she was very young, about 12–14 years of age, by the Ngoni during a raid. She was sold by the Ngoni to a Fungwe native of what is now Isoka district and was married by him. Some years later greetings and messages began to come through from her by way of ivory traders (*Balungwana*). Kafola D11 was told to make enquiries and he discovered where she was so she was finally brought back with her Fungwe husband. He was given ivory and he went away leaving Chimbabantu C5 and her two children by him. The two children are now Nkolemfumu Musenga D6 and Chandamukulu Chabili D7. The former will probably become Paramount and the latter's sons too perhaps. The tribe of the father should not matter in a matrilineal tribe, and in another Bemba lineage there is an example of Ngoni blood in a royal branch of the clan, an occurrence that did not affect succession. After her return home Chimbabantu C5 successively married three Bemba and had two girls and a son, one child by each husband. These three are Kasonde D8, Mubanga D9 and the present Mpepo D10.

In view of recent doubts about her identification raised by Nkula D14, it should be said that it is quite clear that the Chimbabantu C5 who returned was the one who had been taken away. She was too young to have been cicatrised with Bemba markings, but she was old enough to remember her relatives and it was her messages, revealing her knowledge of them, by the traders that first drew their attention to the fact that she was alive. When she returned she had Ngoni face markings and her ear lobes had been slit and enlarged in the Fungwe style. But she proved her identity then; and was accepted as Chimbabantu C5 by all branches of the clan up until the present, so I do not think any questioning can be allowed now.

When Kangwa Chonya C4 died then about 1911 (?) she was normally succeeded by Chimbabantu C5 who became Chandamukulu III. She, C5, died in 1937 but was succeeded by her daughter Chabili D7. This was not a regular succession but Mushimba C11 had died in 1928 and the only granddaughter then was Katongo E2 who was mad, so the only heir was the daughter Chabili D7. She became Chandamukulu IV and is still alive to-day.

Thus the Chandamukulu can show a regular succession, allowing for accidents such as mad granddaughters, right up to the present. But the Mukukamfumu descent has a recent history of complications that I must describe.

The usual home of Mukukamfumu is Kabumba in Lubemba (Kasama district) and it is here that the sacred relics (*bulenge*) of this chieftainship are kept. In 1924 when Bwalya Nkula D12 failed in his claim to the Paramountcy, he was so angry that he made his mother Mukukamfumu Mandechanda C8 leave Lubemba and go to live with him in Chinsali. She went about 1925. But the relics were left at the Kabumba and were cared for by Chisofwa, a councillor of the Mukukamfumu. They stayed from 1925 to 1936 and during all this time there was much discussion and argument not only between Chitimukulu and Nkula but among the councillors too.

613 At the moment, if we continue the line D we find, of the same generation as the reigning chiefs, the sons of the third sister Mushimba C11. She
643 has two sons, Chief Shimumbi IV D18 and Musungu Kafyama D20. If
644 the line is carried right across, these two men are numbers seven and eight from the Paramountcy. In 1942 Kafyama D20 tried to claim the vacant Mpepo on the grounds that the line should be followed right across. But, after discussion with Government, the Superior Native Authority disallowed his claim, not because the Authority had considered the principle but because in any case Mutale Nshika D10 was the right heir for he was the son of the eldest sister. But with the first death of any of the existing chiefs in the Paramountcy line the principle of succession will have to be decided, for there are no more sons of this generation from the elder sisters. This is the problem. Should the third branch and its offspring be considered at all as claimants for chieftainships leading to the Paramountcy? The fact that such people are of the royal totem does entitle them to chieftainships when available, but does it entitle them to those in the main line and can the sons of any royal sister claim this right?

The third branch of the family naturally asserts that it has this right. But it would be hazardous to state that tribal opinion, or the rule of the hereditary councillors, would support it, for an actual issue has never before been placed before them. The Nkula of a second branch, claimed that the descent was changed to a vertical one in its favour by the long run of Paramountcies from the right of the table. This is a belief based on an axiom that is often quoted in tribal arguments, the axiom that history makes the custom. If we examine the historical position of the third branch of the clan we soon see why their claim to follow on the direct line is still a debatable one.

In actual research I have failed to find any instance of the son of a third sister entering the direct line to the Paramountcy. There are instances that will be given later of the sons of the third sisters becoming chiefs, but such occurrences usually resulted in the formation of separate and distinct lines of chiefs. It may be contended that this was only because death cut them off before their chance came, and that these other chieftainships were created so as to give them a chance of power whilst they were waiting to see what happened to the sons of the elder sisters. That may be, but it is an assumption that cannot now be proved. Violent death in wars and quarrels must have cut off as many scions of the first family as of the third in the past, and it is strange that, although there have been third sisters with sons many times in past lineages, it is only now they are enabled to
613 approach the main line.

643 There are two more historical facts that seem to show that the third
644 sister is not on the same footing as the first two. At the moment only the
551 two *nsamfumu* Chandamukulu and Mukukamfumu possess *bulenge* or tribal
[778] relics. These are the sacred objects that all chiefs and other tribal personages have and that are inherited with the name and post. Mushimba C11 had none, perhaps only because she had not inherited a name, but this fact alone would place her on a definitely lower plane than the other two women and indicate that she is not really of the same class. I have already told how Mushimba C11 was not allowed to go to Kabamba for fear she should usurp the post and relics of Mukukamfumu. So long as there were two *nsamfumu* living there was no question then of creating the third one. I have already pointed out that never before has a third name been inherited, although Goodall's big table and the histories of the minor chieftainships

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

A chief's village (*umusumba*) is very much larger than that of a commoner. Inhabitants of the capital are composed of relatives of the chief, his followers, and also a number of families which moved there originally to win royal favour and have become accustomed to court life.[1] Since a chief's reputation depends largely on the size of his capital, and his councillors, courtiers, and administrative officers were drawn largely from his villagers, the *umusumba* is an important unit in the political machine. The late Nkula's village had about 400 huts when I visited it in 1931, that of the Citimukulu 150 in 1938. The capitals of pre-European days were evidently very much larger. These communities were divided into sections (*ifitente*, sing. *icitente*) and though nowadays there are nine *ifitente* at the paramount's village, there were formerly thirty to forty, according to native accounts.

The whole Bemba territory is divided into districts (*ifyalo*, sing. *icalo*). The *icalo* is a geographical unit with a fixed boundary and a name dating from historical times, e.g. the district of the Citimukulu is known as Lubemba, the country of the Bemba, and that of Mwamba, Ituna. These districts are territories originally allotted to members of the royal family, but once so divided they have never been sub-divided to provide smaller chieftainships for a new generation of princes as has happened in some parts of South Africa.

But the *icalo* is also a political unit. It is the district ruled over by a chief with a fixed title—the name of the first ruler to be appointed over each particular strip of land, always a close relative of one of the earlier Citimukulus. There are several types of chief, the paramount, who has his own *icalo*, as well as being overlord of the whole Bemba territory; the territorial chiefs, five or more in number, who have under them sub-chiefs who may rule over very small tracts of country or, rather, over a few villages.[2]

Each of these chiefs is known by the same title *mfumu* and each *icalo* is a more or less self-contained unit, a replica of the social structure of the other. Each capital has its own court, however small. Each chief has rights over the labour of his own villages. They work for him only and not for the paramount as happens among

[1] The phrase '*umwine musumba*' ('inhabitant of the capital') is used to indicate a 'chief's man' or a person of specially polished manners and knowledge of affairs.

[2] Mwamba has as a sub-chief, the Munkonge, and the Nkula has Shimwalule, Mwaba, Mukuikile, Nkweto, &c.

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the Zulu, Swazi and other tribes with the regiment system. The *icalo* is also a ritual unit. At each capital are the sacred relics (*babenye*) of the first holders of the chiefly title and their ancestral spirits are thought to act as tutelary deities of the district, and are worshipped at the *umusumba*, at village shrines, and old hut sites throughout the country, and are also commonly supposed to act as guardian spirits to children born within the *icalo*.[1] Naturally the ritual and political organization of the paramount's capital is more elaborate than that of his inferiors, but even the smallest sub-chief maintains his miniature court and tries to ape the state of those above him, while the bigger territorial chiefs sometimes rivalled the power of the Citimukulu in the old days.

The territorial chieftainships are arranged in order of precedence, according to their nearness to the centre of the country—Lubemba—and the antiquity of their office. To the most important of these chiefdoms—the Mwambaship, the Nkulaship, the Nkolemfumuship, and the Mpepoship, for instances—the Citimukulu appoints his nearest relatives, the one succeeding the other in order of seniority. Thus the present Citimukulu, Kanyanta, has acted in turn as the Nkolemfumu, and the Mwamba before succeeding to the paramountcy (cf. chart on p. 102). On the other hand, the sub-chieftainships have tended to become concentrated in local branches of the royal family, and the paramount's strong grip over the country and his intimate knowledge of affairs at the courts of his fellow chiefs is certainly weaker in these outlying districts than in the case of chiefdoms ruled by his close relatives.

To the commoner, membership of an *icalo* means his allegiance to the chief of that territory. He will describe himself as an inhabitant of a district, such as *Icinga*, i.e. *mwine Icinga* or, alternatively, as the subject of its chief, Nkula, i.e. *mwine Nkula*, and both terms are synonymous. He may move from village to village within the *icalo*, but he remains his chief's man. The latter, in his turn, reckons his assets, not in terms of the size of his territory or its natural resources, but rather by the number of his people and in particular the villages he has under his rule.

(3) *Rank.* Rank is a marked feature of Bemba society. It is based on kinship, real or fictitious, with the chief. All members of the royal crocodile clan (*Bena ŋandu*) are entitled to special respect, precedence on ritual and social occasions, and sometimes

[1] Hence the great preponderance of one or two birth-names in each district.

7: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

continuity of the mother's line of ancestors which is the basis of legal identification with her descent group.[1] A royal princess might even produce an heir by a slave father in the old days without lowering her child's prestige. The relationship between brother and sister, which is a very close one, legally and ritually, is based on the fact that the two were born from one womb, and in the case of the royal family it appears to be equally strong when the two are children of different fathers. These theories of procreation account, not only for the matrilineal descent of the Bemba, on which succession to chieftainship is based, but also for the rank accorded to the royal princesses as mothers of chiefs, and the headmanships and other positions of authority given them.

The Bemba dogma as to the influence of the dead over the living is also of the utmost importance as a basis for political authority. The spirit of a dead man (*umupashi*, plur. *imipashi*) is thought to survive as a guardian presence associated with the land or village site formerly inhabited, and as a spiritual protector of different individuals born in the same lineage group and called by the same name. The *imipashi* of dead chiefs become tutelary deities of the land they ruled over, and responsible for its fertility and the welfare of its inhabitants. They can be approached by the successor to the chieftainship at various sacred spots in the territory and at the sacred relic shrines (*babenye*) in his own village. A chief is said to be powerful because he 'has great *imipashi*!' It is for this reason he is described as the *umwine calo*, 'owner of the land', and it is important to note that in every case the most important *imipashi* and the most sacred relics are those of the first chiefs to enter the land, or the first occupants of a chieftainship.

This dogma as to the influence of the dead over the living inhabitants of a district, or the members of a descent group, is very similar to the general Bantu pattern. But the Bemba belief in the social identification between the dead man and his appointed successor seems to me to be particularly complete. It is the basis of the belief as to the supernatural influence exerted by the chief in his own person as distinct from his direct approach to the spirits

[1] The patrilineal tribes on the Nyassaland border consider the Bemba theory of procreation as entirely ridiculous. One Ngoni expressed his contempt, thus: 'If I have a bag and put money in it, the money belongs to me and not to the bag. But the Bemba say a man puts semen into a woman and yet the child belongs to her and not to him!'

7: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

food, and to protect his person and that of the sacred relics from the contagion of illness, death, or sex defilement.[1]

The ritual by which a successor to the chieftainship is converted from an ordinary individual to a ruler with almost divine powers, has a good deal of political importance. It confers authority on the priests—in this case hereditary officials (*bakabilo*) who carry it out—and gives them, as we shall see, considerable power to check the chief himself. The complete ritual by which the *umupashi* of a dead ruler is liberated to guard the land he governed, and the new heir is installed, is too complex to describe here and now. Briefly speaking, it consists of the desiccation of the body during a period of a year, from one kafir-corn harvest to the next; its burial in a special grove (with human sacrifices in the old days); and the building of a shrine on the site of the deserted capital. To make the new chief, *bakabilo* must preside at the installation of a new great wife, arrange for the sexual purification of the royal pair, and the lighting of their new sacred fire.[2] They must hand over to the heir the heirlooms (*babenye*) of which they have been in charge during the interregnum, and must finally found a new village and build again the sacred huts in which the relics are to be kept. Such a ceremonial may take eighteen months to two years and the participation of all the *bakabilo* and hereditary buriers (*bafingo*) in the case of the paramount; a lesser time and very many fewer priestly dignitaries in the case of the territorial chiefs. The secrecy and awe surrounding these ceremonies is, I believe, one of the ways by which the people's reverence for their chiefs is maintained.

(*b*) *Legal Rules of Descent and Succession.* Against this background of beliefs as to the continuity between one generation and another, the nature of descent and succession is defined exactly by legal rule. Descent in the royal family is reckoned to the time of first occupation of the country, and twenty-five to thirty Citimukulus are remembered. In the case of a territorial chief, the line of ancestors is not so long, and most are described as having been 'born in the country'. Most of the names honoured are those of men but some are those of women, and it seems that

[1] cf. my *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* (1939), chap. xvii.

[2] Hence the importance of the great wife of the chief (*umukolo ua calo*) in the political life of the tribe and the belief that her behaviour also influences the welfare of the land.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

'feed his people' and actually does so if they are in need, besides dispensing hospitality to strangers.

The head of the village acts as its ritual head. In the old days, he put up one village shrine to his own ancestors and one or more others to the dead chiefs of the land. This is still done in out-of-the-way parts of the country and in most places, I think, prayers are offered to these tutelary deities, whether shrines are built to them or no. The headman, like the chief, also influences the life of the community through his own person. He must 'warm the bush' (*ukukafye mpanga*) by an act of ritual intercourse with his wife before the huts of a new village are occupied. He blesses seeds for sowing, axes for tree-cutting, and first-fruits. His fire stands for the life of the community as a whole and must be ritually lighted when occasion demands. He presides over the special divination rites connected with village activities, such as the founding of a new community or the death of a member, and blesses new babies or individuals who are sick.

In the political hierarchy, the headman has his definite place. No Bemba may cultivate land except as a member of a village group, and the headman is responsible for organizing the supply of tribute and labour which must be paid to a chief by the community as a whole. He accompanies his villagers to court when they have cases to present and often speaks for them. He transmits the orders of a chief to his people and nowadays those of the Government. His prerogatives are few in number. As head of a kinship-group, he can command personal service from his younger relatives and should be able to exact one day's work from his people on the first day of tree-cutting and sowing. He is always given tribute of beer or meat. But probably, apart from these few economic privileges, the Bemba headman values most his position of authority, his small following, and the favour of his chief.

The sanctions for his authority nowadays are mainly his popularity, together with the strength of kinship feeling, and the belief of the Bemba that it is dangerous to allow an older relative to die injured. His supernatural powers were a source of strength in the old days, but to a very small extent now, and it must be admitted that the forces which keep a village together are not very strong. It is a constant fear to a headman that his people will melt away.

(*b*) *The Chief*. The functions of the different types of chief

4: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1909) 1910 FT7 Yao FT7
Bemba FQ5

mother is very careful about this in preparing his food lest he die in consequence. He henceforth bears his man's name, and it is an insult to use his child's name again. V 551 881

Initiation of girls takes place in much the same way, instruction being given by the old women. After initiation most girls wear a string of big blue beads round the neck. In some cases, where it is not convenient to go far into the bush, a patch of bush near the village may be selected, the approaches are carefully guarded, and pieces of calico on bamboos are used as flags to mark the place. V 881

Namwali ceremony witnessed at Kasanka's village (Awisa tribe) August 30th, 1907:—A girl about fourteen years of age, well developed. Among the Awisa the initiation ceremony takes place when the girl has reached puberty and is ready to be married. Four days are spent by the candidate in a small grass hut built in the middle of the *bwalo* (= village open space), when instruction is given her in all her future duties by a woman who is her "friend," in this case a woman of about twenty-six years of age. B 981

About mid-day of the fourth day she was brought into the *bwalo* wearing old calico round the waist, and with two friends, one on either side, danced a kind of shuffling step backwards and forwards to the time of four drums; it was witnessed by the women of the village, who occasionally joined in the dance. After this she retired, and later in the afternoon reappeared with blue calico from waist as far as knees, white calico tied round waist as a sash, a rope of blue beads round neck and under arms. On the head she wore an erection made of flour and water with a B [535] B [302]

FIG. 1.

central crest into which were stuck little pieces of reed, lines of red were painted on the white ground as shown in sketch. Always supported by her "friend" or "sponsor," she again danced for a few minutes and then departed.

This night about twelve midnight *Zingau* was to be danced; all the evening and up till midnight a boy went round and round the village calling in a shrill voice warning none to approach. It was a very dark moonless night, and to the beating of seven drums (four small, two medium sized, one big) the *Zingau* came into the *bwalo*. One was an elephant 8 feet high with a man in each pair of legs—made of grass, trunk and tusks complete; the other, called an *Nswala* (a small antelope), resembled a dwarf jack-in-the-green more than anything else. The elephant pranced, the *Nswala* spun round and round; each was attended by a man with a B [534] B [778]